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Under suspicion

Admiral Stansfield Turner, director of the Central Intelligence Agency, has by now been roundly scolded in dozens of editorial pages across the country for his opaque position on using journalists for doing the work of the CIA.

Our thought is to put the dispute into a broader context.

The dispute arose in February when Turner acknowledged that he had several times waived the ban on CIA use of professionals — journalists, clergymen and professors. He told the American Society of Newspaper Editors week before last that he had approved the service of journalists three times (although they weren't used).

Turner seemed genuinely bewildered by the storm of protest. Why do you need a law to protect your ethics? he asked the editors. Why do you feel you "profane your work" if you accept a CIA assign-

ment? Why can't you serve your country and still feel free? What are you, unpatriotic or something?

Turner's uncomprehending position was fully endorsed by Mr. Carter two days later.

They beg the issue. Journalists are concerned not for the ethics of those who accept CIA assignments, but for the reputation and safety of all those who don't, and the integrity of their craft.

Journalists are not alone in feeling threatened. The Rev. William Howard, president of the National Council of Churches, said in February that Turner, in waiving the ban, "had impugned the reputation of every American missionary . . . (with) serious injury to the work of American churches."

And Dr. David Stowe, executive vice president of the United Church of Christ's Board for World Ministries, explained that "ministries around the world . . . depend on intimate, trustful relation-

ships among Christians and non-Christians of many nations . . . We cannot tolerate the jeopardizing of these relationships by even the suspicion that missionaries, clergy or church workers are involved in spying."

The failure of even so sensitive a CIA director as Adm. Turner to understand this simple truth is dismaying. It may be wrong to write a law binding the CIA in this matter, but it may be necessary.